NEW LOCAL HUMANIST CELEBRANT

By Liam Timmins

Fiona Hope is the newest Humanist celebrant for County Galway East and South Roscommon, beginning her training with the Humanist Association of Ireland (H.A.I.) in 2021 and now fully accredited to carry out all ceremony types including Weddings, Baby Naming's, Vow Renewals, Funerals, Memorials and Milestone ceremonies.

Born and raised in Ballinasloe, Fiona has never wandered too far from home. Being a fan of the sense of community in town, she holds great affinity for the various groups, clubs and volunteer efforts within the municipality. "You won't meet nicer than a Ballinasloe person" declares Fiona.

As a young girl, she always viewed the world differently from what she learned at home. Originally brought up Catholic, her views began to fluctuate over time. Fiona first encountered the Humanist Association of Ireland (HAI) website when she became a parent in 2016, contemplating how she would celebrate her child's birth and what beliefs she would bestow onto him outside the constraints of religious belief. Her contact with the forum gave her a sense of relief, finding a community that voiced similar thinking to her and resources to celebrate her beliefs, including the option of having a Humanist Naming Ceremony.

She contacted celebrant Bridget Carlin who arranged the occasion. Fiona was inspired by how the event was conducted, finding it very personal, meaningful, and inclusive of all people and beliefs. From that moment on she decided this was the path she hoped to follow.

Fiona's parents were very understanding of her outlook, encouraging her free thinking without any judgment. Both her parents grew up in the heart of town, with her mom originally living in Society Street and her dad in St Joseph's Place.

Now listed on the Register of Solemnizers in Ireland, the young celebrant can now legally marry couples and carry out ceremonies at a host of hotels, restaurants, museums, galleries, and other landmark locations around the country. Fiona derives great satisfaction from hosting these ceremonies and feels an incredible buzz for the day after the event. She feels incredibly grateful and honored in delivering these life marking ceremonies and appreciates all the feedback given following the occasions.

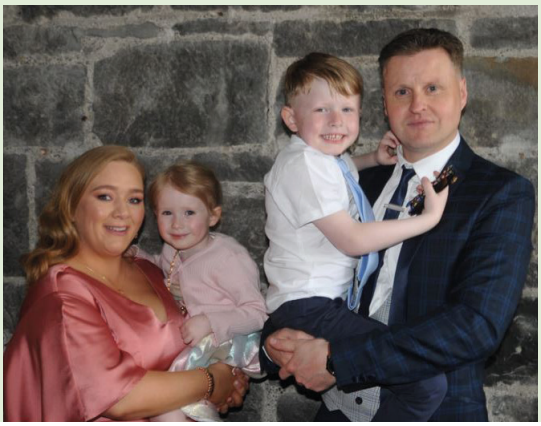
"I find each ceremony unique and special in its own right, providing a real insight into people's lives and stories. I especially love it when friends or family reach out for ceremonies, once having to double job being both bridesmaid and celebrant for one of my close friends" she states.

The HAI carries out roughly 3,000 ceremonies per year, growing each quarter. According to a recent survey via weddingsonline.com, fewer than half of Irish wedding ceremonies were religious for the first time in the country's history.

Fiona describes the difference between Atheism and Humanism and the confusion that sometimes arises – "Atheism is simply being an absence of belief in God, while the latter is a worldwide view and way of life. Humanism seeks to rationalize the remedies of society exclusively behind people, as well as emphasizing human values and goodness. The belief presents itself to an audience who

interpret existence resulting from the natural world, defining itself behind values of compassion, equality and reason" she explains.

"Humanism is all about celebrating our lives as free, loving and creative humans. That's why we offer non-religious humanist celebrations, based on celebrating life and love as an alternative to a religious wedding, christening or funeral. Every ceremony we do is different because each one is built around the person or the couple. That makes each event unique and meaningful, with words, readings, music, day, time and even the location all chosen by the individuals to represent their love, feelings and experiences. I work alongside individuals; couples and families to create a meaningful ceremony for their personal occasion" states the busy Celebrant.



Fiona is always happy to have a chat over the phone, preferring a ring over a message as she finds it more personal. She would suggest people call her to ask any burning questions and get a feel for the service she offers. The celebrant would recommend getting in touch with her as soon as possible at the early stages of planning a ceremony, with weddings usually having a lead time of six to nine months. On the other hand, affairs such as a funeral would be organised with urgence and a typically much shorter planning period.

She can be contacted at (087) 642 2006 or by email at fionawardcelebrant@gmail.com

Available Humanist celebrants for your occasions, including Fiona, can be found on the HAI website www.humanism.ie.

EIL

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GOLF CLASSIC FOR GARBALLY

The Garbally Parents' Association are hosting their second annual Golf Classic at the Rossgloss Golf Course for their major fundraising event this May.

Last year, an incredibly tight competition was held, with just eight points separating the first and last team placements. The winning squad consisted of Connemara natives Colum O'Meara, Declan Grimes, Mike Kealy and Dave McDermott who scored together 108 points and helped upgrade facilities in the school, raising proceeds for the current and capital requirements of pupils.

On Friday May 12 and Saturday May 13, the Parents' Association are looking to host an even greater competition for the town. "We are fortunate that in our community people and businesses are always very generous in their support of the school and we are asking again for everyone's support to make this year's golf classic event a success" stated Ann Marie Waters a member of the Organising Team.

The Association are promising it will be an exciting event with a host of great prizes to be won. Additionally, the group are encouraging anyone to help raise funds for the school through sponsoring a T Box for €50. Sponsorships are well publicised on the day and are advertised for all golfers and fans to see.

Supporters can submit a team of four members. There are two deals available, one being the Golfers package at a cost of €160 per team and a Corporate package at a cost of €300 per team.

If you wish to sponsor a hole or book a tee time, you can call the organisers at (089) 207 5318. "We would love to see you there and please feel free to spread the word to all golfing enthusiasts that you know" concluded Ann Marie.

Last years Golf Classic winners Colum O'Meara, Declan Grimes, Mike Keay and Dave McDermott.